DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 260 065 SP 026 420

AUTHOR Lapchick, Richard E.
TITLE Monitoring Student and Olympic Athletes.
PUB DATE 27 Jun 85
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented to the U.S. Olympic Academy (June 27, 1985).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Achievement; *Athletes; Athletics; Higher Education; *Role Models; Scholarships; Secondary Education; Social Attitudes
IDENTIFIERS Center for the Study of Sport in Society MA; *Professional Sports

ABSTRACT

This speech discusses the failure to educate America's athletes. The speech covered the extent of the national scandal of the exploitation of athletes as well as the work of Northeastern University's Center for the Study of Sport in Society. The Center is the first university-based program to address the issue of the education of athletes with programs affecting middle school, high school, college and professional athletes. Professional athletes are encouraged to continue their education in preparation for retiring from active competition, and also to counsel youngsters on the importance of obtaining a good education. (Author/JD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED260065

MONITORING STUDENT AND OLYMPIC ATHLETES

ADDRESS TO THE US OLYMPIC ACADEMY-

Richard E. Lapchick

27 JUNE 1985

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

R.E. Lapchick

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

I want to thank the U.S. OLYMPIC ACADEMY FOR inviting me to speak here today. Today's topics are of critical importance to our educational leaders who, along with parents and religious organizations, are charged with being the moral guardians of our nation's values.

The glamorization of sport has led to a near collapse of that guardianship when it comes to our athletes. All we have to do is pick up the newspaper to see how far we have gone-

June:	NCAA Presidents' Commission met on the "integrity of intercollegiate athletics"- death penalty
	USA TODAY poll- 27% graduation rate
May:	Georgia- 2 years w/o single college level course
April:	Tulane
	Arizona State
	Memphis State
	Denny McLain
Feb-Mar	25 athletes arrested in 45 day period
	Clemson - president resigns
general:	college graduation rate of 30%; 20% for blacks
	Walter Byers finally admits $20,000

As men and women associated with sports and education, I know you are aware of the problem of the exploitation of college athletes. Yet it is still worse for the high

SP026420

school student. I know it is painful for you to see some of the millions of America's youth lose their chance at a meaningful education because they have bought the dream that they will beat the 12,000 to 1 odds and become a pro, stressing eligibility and not educational skills.

They can't even see that 49 out 50 won't even get a scholarship to play in college; or that 29 of 30 won't play at all in college. Every year, we have the image of high profile pros luring America's youth through the media to pursue the dream. In an Olympic year like 1984, millions dream of becoming the next Mary Lou Retton or Michael Jordan. Retton and Jordan, among others former Olympians, are now joining pro athletes to help us in the Center's programs to reach young people across the nation.

The acknowledgement of the problem has caused the positive response to CSSS: educators, public officials, media, and athletes themselves: CAN'T BELIEVE THIS HASN'T HAPPENED BEFORE.

First of all, I must inform you of the underlying premise of the Center and that is SPORT IS A REFLECTION OF SOCIETY AND NOT A PANACEA FOR BETTERING ITS ILLS. It was always unrealistic to think that sports was THE way out of poverty for low-income children or that sports would lead to international harmony.

As long as racism exists in society, it will exist in sport;

As long as sexism exists in society, it will also exist in sport;

As long as the Soviet Politiburo and the State Department are hostile to each other, sports contacts won't bring them together.

This is not to say that sports is a negative force in society, just that it reflects it both positively and negatively. There is little question that sports has the potential for delivering significant benefits to individuals, institutions and

nations.

A second premise is that coaches, athletic directors, and college presidents would choose to effectively educate their athletes if they saw a way to do it and still produce championship teams. Those are not incompatible goals and all of us have to help show the way.

To look at the Final Four should have given us the most hope of all about what is possible. Tulane and now, Memphis State, a participant cloud it. But Georgetown, St. John's and Villanova all graduate at a rate of 90% or better. YOU CAN HAVE EXCELLENT ATHLETIC PROGRAMS WHERE ATHLETES ALSO GET DEGREES.

TODAY'S CONFERENCE:

-I have been asked to inform you on the activities of the Center regarding the monitoring of student athletes and how this might tie into Olympic athletes in the future.

American Olympic athletes, forced by the rigid and perhaps unrealistic concept of "pure" amateurism, are frequently left with only enough resources to maintain their competitiveness, ignoring educaional goals. Professional athletes, most without college degrees, face difficult transitions from the playing field to post-athletic careers. This is true of men and women, blacks and whites.

The academic problems of athletes stem from several related sources:

1. sports has become the broadest cultural "common denominator" in our society. Media space devoted to sports makes it seem larger than life. Pro athletes become among society's most celebrated role models.

2. the media has helped perpetuate the myths about sport, especially the one

about the pursuit of the dream being the way out of poverty.

3. parental pressures at the Little League and Pop Warner levels bring the child deeply into the competition.

4. by the time the child has bought the dream, high school coaches and advisors intensify the competition and stress eligibilty instead of developing educational skills. Yet 29 of 30 high school athletes will not play in college and only 1 in 50 will get a scholarship. Frighteningly, by the time the young person is in high school, the student-athlete has become the athlete.

5. the competition at the college level for the revenue and glory available from big-time college sports pressure coaches to cut corners at every turn. Those hurt most by the cutting are invariably the athletes. Once again, it is eligibility and not academic skills that are emphasized.

6. the athletes, in turn, do their part. Feeling the closeness of the pros, many are all too willing to cut those academic corners to remain eligible. The results are predictable in terms of the potential to receive meaningful degrees for college athletes in the major sports.

Like others, we at the Center have pondered the question of the viability of national and individual institutional reform:

How far will the NCAA be willing to go to bring about reform?

How much will Proposition 48 help?

Will athletic powerhouses voluntarily improve their own conditions without sanctions?

Based on history, prospects are not encouraging. But our efforts are geared to capitalize on the COLLECTIVE MOTIVATION OF INDIVIDUAL ATHLETES.

- Solitary voices like those of Muhammad Ali and Bill Russell in the early 1960's helped athletes begin to openly confront the big issues, such as racism.

- Jon Carlos and Tommie Smith, inspired by Harry Edwards, fired a national movement of predominantly black athletes to hasten change that lasted for half a decade.

- Curt Flood began the process of struggle in pro sports by denying himself so that his successors could benefit;

- pro sports unions have taken up his challenge and moved the cause of pro athletes light years ahead of where it was a few short years ago.

Now many more athletes see that whatever they do becomes OK for their little brothers in junior high; if they drink, do drugs, don't get degrees, then it all seems OK for the 13 year old because he believes that he will be matching the million dollar income SOMEDAY.

More aware of the influence they have, some of today's athletes are making themselves available to give something back to society. It was with this in mind that I began the exploration of what the Center could do by going to the players associations. The first stop was the NFLPA, thought of by many as the most progressive and active of the unions.

Since the Center had a university as its base, discussions started with research needs - studies of the academic effects of certain of the governing rules of sport such as the freshmen eligibility rule, red-shirting, the transfer rule, etc. We had already formed a National Faculty with 85 of the nation's top sports scholars at 65 different universities to enable us to conduct such studies with access to a broad national sample.

The actual educational levels of the NFL players was of paramont concern. According to the NFLPA, 33% of the players in the NFL have degrees and that is the highest of any

professional sport. I want to be clear on that point -33% HAVE degrees. We began to discuss what has now become known as the University Degree Completion Program. Let me tell you about the concept because it has become the heart of the Center's program.

The Center has developed a special program, in consultation with professional sports leagues, players' associations, and local Boston teams to make Northeastern available as a central universty where athletes can complete their degrees. Tom "Satch" Sanders, a 13 year NBA veteran and a coach of both Harvard and the Celtics, has been hired as Associate Director of the Program to help counsel athletes through the difficult transition period. A consortium with other major universities in the United States and Canada is being established so that the UDCP can serve as many athletes as possible.

Last week we announced the founding members: St. John's, NYU, Seton Hall, William Patterson, Temple, Georgetown, Denver, Cal State-Long Beach, University of California-Berkeley, the University of San Francisco. The plan is to add 5 to 6 universities each year until most cities with a minimum of two professional sports franchises will have UDCP's. In addition to adopting the UDCP and Outreach Programs, consortium members have agreed to a set of criteria within their own schools that will enable them to better assure the full education of their own athletes. Perhaps most importantly, they will readmit all athletes who entered their university since 1975 so they can finish their degrees at the expense of the university.

The UDCP has been conceived in order to enhance the educational development of the players involved. The Center currently has formal agreements with the players associations in the NFL, USFL, NBA, NHL and the MISL. In addition, cooperative arrangements have been worked out with the National Football League, the National Hockey League and the National Basketball Association. The program emphasizes

assisting athletes through the transitional stage between the end of their playing careers and the beginning of whatever new careers they choose to follow.

Academic and professional counseling for the athlete is a primary component of the process. In evaluating the previous academic background of the athlete, the counselor designs the most expeditious plan for achieving the future goals of the athlete. In addition to all the usual educational services available to students, tutors are available to the athlete where necessary. That's the theory. The reality is even more exciting. Forty-five members of the New England Patriots, the Boston Bruins, and the Red Sox have been enrolled in the program for almost two months and the results have been startling. These athletes, and others like them who we will be members of the Consortium are the next line after Russell, Ali, Edwards, Smith, Carlos and Flood.

As exciting as it has been to work with these athletes and to see them realize what they are doing, it is what they have agreed to do now that will make the greatest contribution since a major part of this effort will be to utilize the experience of the current or former pro athletes in the program. We have a formal agreement with the City of Boston and with the Boston public schools so that the athletes can use their status as societal role models and go into the public elementary, middle, and high schools to counsel students there about the importance of balancing their education with any sports dreams they might have. It is at this level where athletes begin the dream of a pro career and downplay the importance of developing skills beyond the playing arenas. Hearing their contemporary sports heroes talk about educational values will, hopefully, help make these young people aware of their overall potential and responsibility to develop that potential. We are not just one-shotting the schools but setting up on-going relationships with the athletes at each school. To date, the pros have had face-to-face contact with 14,000 Boston

school students.

Bob Lipsyte, the former columnist for the New York Times and current CBS network commentator, told these pro athletes that "They are your little brothers, and in setting yourself free, you will offer a new picture of the athlete as open and vulnerable and ready to become complete and independent. And, of course, truly powerful...You are pioneers, and when you finish this program you will be in a position to share your victory with all the young athletes behind you who will know that becoming a major league athlete is not the final goal. That there can be success and meaningful work AFTER the last game." Bob is the Senior Fellow at the Center.

I am pleased to announce today that the Center has appointed Anita DeFranz as Western Coordinator for the Consortium. Anita is a two-time Olympian and was Vice-President of the LAOOC. A specific goal for her is to bring Olympic athletes into the program to complete their degrees. Olympians of Southern California, of which she is President, have already agreed. Initial discussions have taken place with Baaron Pittinger to explore ways of working with the USOC directly. We hope to fully involve America's Olympic athletes.

As I said earlier, the UDCP is at the heart of the Center's activities. There are many other aspects involving academic and outreach programming that I will not discuss today. However, I do want to mention two.

For universities, we have put together a seminar series that is designed both for athletes, coaches and administrators. A team of experts goes in to discuss the entire range os issues that athletes will face including academics, injuries, substance abuse, team race relations, and future careers, whether it be as pro athletes or as ordinary citizens. We are now seeking funding to put on a conference for members of

the National Association of Academic Advisors to train them to be able to draw on local experts in their region to conduct such seminars on a wider scale.

As I said earlier, we see have emphasized trying to make the individual athletes aware of what they are confronting so they can deal with it now. This is assuming the inevitability of the long-term nature of any institutional changes. Everything that happens to an athlete after his career ends depends on what knowledge and skills he has obtained while playing on the field or court. Preparing them for life after sports is crucial. Our programs are designed to reach other critical actors in the development of the student-athlete. We are having the pros address the annual athletic awards banquets so they can reach the parents and let them know what they should ask recruiters, especially "what is the graduation rate for athletes at that university?" We also held a New England region-wide conference for coaches to sensitize them to the issues involved.

However, this being assumed, we definitely see a role for the Center and members of the Consortium as advocates for institutional change. By bringing the results of the studies done by the National Faculty to the attention of the media, the Center will work to bring about reform first at the institutions that join the Consortium and, subsequently, at the national level through the NCAA. The universities, by adopting special programs for their own athletes, are becoming role models for other universities.

We fully believe that the student-athlete deserves "special treatment." Part of their being enrolled as student athletes is an obligation to give literally thousands of hours of their time to the school for its benefit during their four years of eligibilty. Their time brings the school entertainment, prestige and, very frequently, handsome revenues. To argue against special treatment would seem patently

unfair.

However, what is meant by special treatment IS THE ASSURANCE OF ACADEMIC PREPAREDNESS - NOT THE EXCEPTION FROM SUCH PREPAREDNESS.

ABSTRACT

This was a speech delivered to the US Olympic Academy on the subject of the failure to educate America's athletes. The speech covered the extent of the national scandal of the exploitation of athletes as well as the work of Northeastern University's Center for the Study of Sport in Society. The Center is the first university-based program to address the issue of the education of athletes with programs affecting middle school, high school, college and pro athletes. Eleven other major universities adopted the Center's program after one year.